

Aspiration for the Auckland CBD Experience



July 2003

Executive Summary

A shared vision for the Auckland CBD will provide the future direction and guide for its physical, social, cultural and economic development.

Auckland City Council's Strategic Direction project aims to develop the vision and then support its implementation through an integrated programme aimed at progressing the area.

In May 2003 Auckland City Council commissioned qualitative research to gain insight into the aspiration of Auckland CBD user groups in regard to how they want to experience the CBD. The following describes the research findings.

Auckland CBD's aspirational essence is **"lifestyle"**. The pillars are: harbour and nature, people and communities, heritage and identity, culture and entertainment, infrastructure, business opportunities, transforming (always changing).

The aspiration for a "lifestyle" CBD will be enabled through: access, leadership and growth, and realised through new experiences, a sense of freedom, a vibrant community, harmony, unity, and sensual pleasure.

Auckland CBD users are influenced by the city's natural environment, which is largely formed by the harbour, volcanic cones, sea, parks, beaches and changeable weather. They love the colours of the Sky Tower lit up at night, views, yachts, waterfront activity, the multi-cultural environment, art exhibitions, shopping, entertainment, restaurants, cafes and bars that the CBD offers and embrace Auckland as being a "lifestyle" city. They feel strongly about the preservation of heritage buildings, ecology, natural environments, the creation of green and open spaces, and establishing a unique identity that is linked with the harbour, history and maritime activity, i.e. distinctly Pacific. They are emotionally attached to Albert Park and regard the Viaduct, Vulcan Lane, High Street and K'Road as destinations with special ambience and character. They thrive on socialisation and desire the CBD to be a "buzzing" and "lively 24 hour experience", with an "x factor".

The desired social environment is described as "pleasure-seeking, entertaining, alive, active, creative, dynamic, vibrant, multi-cultural, bright, youthful, fun and hot". The CBD offers a vibrant mix of restaurants, cafes, bars, nightlife, live music and theatre. To further enhance the CBD's social appeal, there is a distinct need for value-add activities such as free events, street performance and live music.

However the CBD is currently seen as "unfriendly, disjointed, unrelated, lacking in personality, hardened, dowdy, no elegance, concrete and glass, grey, lacking in green spaces", and suffering from "lack of planning". The absence of a reliable and convenient transport system, traffic congestion, and lack of parking are preventing access to the CBD. Those who do not know the CBD well become "frustrated" with not knowing where to go or how to get there due to lack of street signage and information on what's on. Building developments within the CBD have created limited or no visible connection with the harbour and the CBD is perceived as "overdeveloped, lacking in identity" and "expanding with no direction". Queen Street is no longer viewed as a desirable shopping destination. The CBD is described as "someone else's place".

This presents a challenge. The development of the CBD area will need to align with the aspiration for the more cultured experience. The concept is academic with stated qualities of a "beautiful environment, considered design, green spaces, trees, sculpture, water, and linkage with the harbour". The area will also need to reflect the desired qualities of: "artistic, visual, beautiful, sensual, connecting, inspiring and transforming, authentic, original, natural and N.Z."